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C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 000237

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CCA AND WHA/CAR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/22/2017

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SUBJECT: TRINIDAD & TOBAGO - LIBERTAD ACT TITLE III REVIEW

REF: A. STATE 52541 B.PORT OF SPAIN 121 C. PORT OF SPAIN 88

Classified By: Acting DCM John Ries - reasons 1.4 (b/d)

(U) This message responds to reftel (A) questions.

11. (C) QUESTION: Has the host country, in Post's opinion, worked to promote the advancement of democracy and human rights in Cuba? This can include demonstrations of support for and solidarity with the Cuban people connected to the May 21 Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People, for which we have asked host countries to: 1) draw attention to the plight of Cuba's prisoners of conscience, 2) call for legitimate democratic transition in Cuba, 3) carry out activities that demonstrate support for Cuba's democratic opposition, civil society, and the Cuban people in general.

ANSWER: Post is not aware of any GOTT initiatives in support of promoting democracy and human rights in Cuba.

12. (C) Has the host country made other public statements or undertaken other governmental actions, such as resolutions in the national assemblies condemning human rights abuses in Cuba; statements in support of democracy following the undemocratic succession of power from Fidel to Raul Castro; or actions in support of civil society in Cuba through host country's diplomatic missions or other fora.

ANSWER: The GOTT has made no public statements or undertaken any governmental action to condemn human rights abuses in Cuba or support civil society in Cuba. Public statements by Prime Minister Manning and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs following the succession of power from Fidel to Raul Castro focused on Cuban assistance to T&T and the rest of the Caribbean, with no comment on Cuba's internal political or economic systems (reftel C).

13. (C) QUESTION: What is the nature of investments that host country businesses have in Cuba?

ANSWER: Post is aware of no Trinidad & Tobago (T&T) companies or individuals with significant presence or investments in Cuba.

14. (C) QUESTION: Are there any bilateral trade agreements between host country and Cuba?

ANSWER: Trinidad & Tobago does not have a bilateral trade agreement with Cuba, but as a member of CARICOM, T&T has ratified the trade agreement between CARICOM and Cuba. T&T established a trade office in Havana in September 2007 to serve as a conduit between T&T manufacturers and Cuban state companies. The T&T Business Development Corporation, a public company affiliated with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, led a trade mission to Cuba to coincide with the dedication of the trade office.

15. (C) QUESTION: Are there any exchange programs between host country and Cuba, including but not limited to: scholarships for host country nationals to study in Cuba; Cuban-paid medical travel for host country nationals; and Cuban doctors working in host country?

ANSWER: Twenty-two Cuban doctors and eighteen Cuban nurses arrived in Trinidad on May 18, 2007 to begin two-year contracts with the Ministry of Health, working at public health facilities. They replaced seventy Cuban medical personnel whose contracts to serve in T&T expired earlier in 2007. Prime Minister Manning has told us in the past that he does not want to expand this cooperation.

In July 2007, a team of Cuban agricultural advisors visited Trinidad to survey the proposed site for a 200-acre demonstration farm in Tucker Valley, Chaguaramas, a joint venture between the GOTT and Cuba aimed at introducing Cuban organic farming techniques to T&T. According to recent press reports, the project is scheduled to begin in July 2008 with the first harvest reaching the market in 2009.

16. (C) QUESTION: Have there been any high-level diplomatic visits between Cuba and host country in the past six months?

ANSWER: The last high-level diplomatic visit took place in September 2007, more than six months ago, when Prime Minister Patrick Manning led a trade mission to Cuba, opened the GOTT trade office in Havana, and stated that the GOTT will open an embassy in Havana "very shortly." Separately, MFA sources have informed us that Lester Efebo Wilkinson is the GOTT

Ambassador-designate to Cuba. However, definitive dates for opening the embassy and for the public announcement of Mr. Wilkinson's appointment have yet to be set.

17. (C) Post believes it is in the U.S. national interest to suspend Title III of the Libertad Act for Trinidad & Tobago, based on T&T's contribution to U.S. energy security as a reliable supplier of crude oil and liquefied natural gas and its importance as an economic, political, and security leader in the eastern Caribbean. Trinidad also will host the next Summit of the Americas in early 2009.

AUSTIN